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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
PRESS CONFERENCE AT THE CONCLUSION OF NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS MEETINGS
SEVILLE, SPAIN
SEPTEMBER 30, 1994

MR. BACON: We're ready to start. Welcome to the press conference by William J. Perry, the United States Secretary of Defense. He's joined by Robert Hunter, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO. Dr. Perry will start with a brief statement, and then we'll take your questions afterwards. I ask that, as in the previous press conference, you give your name and organization as you ask your question. Thanks.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you, Ken. We have made, I believe, considerable progress on several important Alliance issues during the last two days in Sevilla. Before I summarize the meeting, I want to especially thank Defense Minister Garcia Vargas for showing us the hospitality for which this elegant city is famous, not the least of which was some very, very special flamenco dancers last night. I also want to thank him for inviting me to discuss important NATO and bilateral issues with him and with Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez in my meeting in Madrid before I came here yesterday. And I want to thank NATO's Acting Secretary General, Sergio Balanzino, for the leadership he has shown in Sevilla, as well as for his steady hand at the helm of the Alliance after our loss of Manfred Woerner.

NATO is a success because it's sixteen members share a commitment to strength, freedom and peace. This year, the attendance of Minister Leotard from France greatly contributed to our sense of unity and common purpose.

Last year, in Travemunde, we experimented with a less formal meeting style, designed to promote dialogue. That worked so well that we decided to continue that experiment here, and the success of that meeting led us to call this meeting "Sevilla-muende" in honor of the great meeting we had at Travemunde last year.

The United States has offered to host the next informal NATO ministerial meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia. This meeting will be held next Fall. And some of our members are suggesting we call this meeting "Williams-villa."

We made progress today and yesterday on several important issues, including Bosnia, NATO expansion, the establishment of

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Combined Joint Task Forces and Mediterranean security. This last topic has special importance because we are adjusting to a world where the challenges have moved from the central region to the southern flank of NATO.

On Bosnia, we observe that the Bosnian government has indicated that it could accept a six-month delay in the lifting of the embargo which it had been requesting. We welcome that announcement, but we do not want to march in place during those six months. We want to use that six month period to move decisively towards a peace plan. Therefore, the defense ministers agreed that during that period we must increase pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the Contact Group's peace terms.

Specifically, we reached a consensus among the defense ministers that NATO and UNPROFOR should use its air power more forcefully in response to provocations by the Bosnian Serbs. NATO permanent representatives will meet in Brussels next week to work out the details. But in the future, we expect air strikes with greater speed, with surprise, and with more force than in the past. In addition, we will encourage the Contact Group, which includes Russia, to work with greater determination to stop the flow of war materiel between Serbia and Bosnia.

For the U.S., a NATO determination to intensify pressure on the Bosnian Serbs is particularly important. President Clinton has made a commitment to Congress to seek a UN Security Council resolution lifting the arms embargo against the Bosnian government, unless the Contact Group's peace plans are accepted. President Izetbegovic's suggestion that the UN delay the lift for six months gives us all a new opportunity to work harder for a peaceful solution. We can take full advantage of that opportunity only if NATO honors its commitment to apply credible force.

The issue of NATO expansion, which we discussed today, is a sign, really, of the Alliance's success. Questions of how, and when, to reach out to new friends in the East will not be answered quickly and they were not answered today. But at this meeting, we did discuss the process that will lead inevitably to a larger, more inclusive organization of free market democracies that work with us as security allies.

Partnership for Peace implementation and NATO expansion are not alternatives. Joint exercises under the Partnership for Peace will be an important building block toward a firmer security foundation in Europe.

We also launched discussions that will lead to a new NATO focus on the security issues along the southern flank, from

Portugal and Spain to Greece and Turkey. As I said in Madrid, NATO needs to be looking south, and we have started to consider confidence-building and other measures designed to address our concerns on this very volatile southern flank of NATO.

In a few years, NATO will celebrate its fiftieth birthday. The Alliance has prospered because it has been steadfast in its commitment to peace through strength, yet adaptable enough to meet the new realities. We saw these qualities at work again here at Sevilla.

Now I'll be happy to take some of your questions.

MR. BACON: Charlie?

Q. Mr. Secretary, Charlie Allinger of Reuters. I'll ask you what I asked Mr. Balanzino. I'd like to know if and why you are confident that NATO--that the UN, I beg your pardon--which it seems is the reluctant final arbiter, will approve NATO's demand for more robust air strikes in Bosnia?

SECRETARY PERRY: I would not characterize the outcome of this meeting as a NATO demand. Let me describe where I think the situation is, starting off, first of all, by noting that the UN resolution which calls for an end to those activities that would lead to the strangulation of Sarajevo and the other safe haven areas, also called on member nations--or a coalition of member nations--to take actions to prevent that. So we're operating in the first instance under a UN resolution. NAC, the North Atlantic Council, then passed its own resolution to respond to that request from the UN, and that authorized the use of air power. That is the genesis from which this use of air power has derived.

We--the defense ministers at this meeting--came to a judgment that the use of air power has not been sufficiently effective, particularly the last two air strikes that were made. But it is important to note that this arrangement for air strikes is a dual key arrangement. That is to say, the ground commander has to approve any air strikes that are to be conducted. Now, because of our concern of this lack of effectiveness, we called for two different measures, one of which was a strict enforcement of the existing resolutions which spell out in considerable detail what provocations would be considered to be appropriate for air strikes. Now, NATO does not have authority to determine which incidents will call for the use of air strikes. It is up to the United Nations--the UN--to give guidance to UNPROFOR as to what conditions these strikes may be called for. And we call on them to do that. But that's not a demand, it's a request of the UN. But the second aspect of this is that, if an air strike is called for, the

defense ministers were very clear, have a very clear consensus, on the conditions in which those air strikes will be conducted. If we're participating in air strikes we want them to be effective. And this is something which NATO can speak on directly. And we asserted that in the future, when air strikes are called for, we want them to be timely--that is to respond immediately to the provocations, not hours later or even days later. Secondly, we want them to be performed without warning. And third we want them to be authorized for multiple targets. We believe all of those conditions are necessary for truly effective and robust use of air power, and I also make the important point that all of those conditions deal with the safety of the air crew, because delaying, giving warning, going after single targets, all endanger unnecessarily the air crew. So these are issues on which we felt we had authority to speak.

So I want to separate now the issue of calling for a strike, which is the UN authority, and the way in which we respond to the strike, which we feel we have authority.

Q. Would the UN agree to this?

SECRETARY PERRY: We will be discussing this in the days ahead with the UN. Very clearly, we do not want a divergence between the UN and NATO, and there will not be one. And, in particular, you cannot conduct a meaningful tactical air support operation if there's a divergence of views between the ground commander and the air commander. These two have to work closely together. So we have come to our consensus on how we think these air strikes will be conducted. We will be discussing these in considerable detail with the UN, both at the headquarters level and at the UNPROFOR level, in the days ahead.

MR. BACON: John Diamond of the Associated Press.

Q. Yes, Mr. Secretary. Again on the Bosnia issue. Is the Administration now going to have to go to Congress and request some specific action in order to forestall an immediate move toward lifting the arms embargo in light of what the Bosnian government has said? And then as a follow I'd just like to ask if it's your feeling that on the use of air power, that in your discussions with the ministers, did you feel you got most of what you wanted? There was some discussion yesterday in briefings from the other ministers to the effect that there was reluctance of your colleagues to go along with the idea of the use of air power as a coercive measure.

SECRETARY PERRY: Let me answer that second question first, John, and see if I can clarify that issue. There was agreement at the beginning of the meeting that the last few

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NATO air strikes had not been sufficiently effective. There was complete agreement on that point. Secondly, there was disagreement at the beginning of the meeting on how best to deal with that problem--how to achieve the objective of making these effective. And in the course of a day or a day and a half's discussion, we did reach an agreement on how to produce--we reached a real consensus on what we needed to do to make these air strikes more effective. And I listed the three factors which I thought were fundamental to that. I think that it's a remarkable meeting when you start a meeting with disagreement on an issue and you end it with agreement.

Now the other question you asked me had to do with Congress. We will have--the United States--will have to consult with the Congress on the specific language in the legislation. One of the specific questions will be the extent to which we can comply with that by requesting an embargo but requesting a six-month delay in its effective date. That was not envisioned by the Congress at the time they wrote the legislation, so we will have to be sure that we can comply with the Congressional requirements here. I think the important point to be made here, though, John, is that Congress' underlying concern is they wanted to put more pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan. And I think any plan that we present to them, then, that does that, I think tends to meet that objective. We need to be sure that we can also comply with the legalities.

MR. BACON: Jonathan Markus, of the BBC.

Q. Mr. Secretary, forgive me, but if I could get to Bosnia. Whilst some people here are very well versed in distinctions between UN and NATO and so on, to me it's extraordinary that two organizations whose principal methods--Security Council, and NATO--are the same, is having this sort of disagreement. And at the end of the day whilst you're being very polite in your requests to the UN to try and tighten things up, be more robust and so on, is NATO prepared, or are NATO governments prepared to put some pressure, or bring some pressure to bear on the United Nations? And the second question, I was intrigued by your remarks about Russia's role in the transfer of war materiel across the Serb--Bosnian Serb frontier. Could you just give us a little insight perhaps into what the present situation on that frontier is as far as assessments in the Pentagon are concerned?

SECRETARY PERRY: On the first point, I would observe that both the United Nations and NATO are composed of its member nations, and the member nations determine the policies of these two organizations. The member nations that are most concerned about the issues we're talking about now are members of both NATO and the United Nations. And so when nations like

the United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom agree on a policy sitting in NATO, the next step is to go with their national hats on now to the United Nations and request that that same agreement be achieved there. That is the process which we have to go through. We've only completed the first step in that process today, which is getting a consensus among first the defense ministers, that now has to be elevated to consensus in national capitals of these same countries, which I believe will be quickly and readily achieved, and then reflecting that view of national capitals, to the United Nations. In addition to that, there needs to be technical consultation between the military arm in the Military Committee in NATO, and the military arm of UNPROFOR. To be sure that we have a technical understanding of what is being proposed here--a technical and tactical understanding. So all of that discussion is still ahead of us.

You had another question.

Q. ...the Balkan Serb/Serb frontier, you mentioned Russia's role in helping defend the passage of war materiel across that border. Can you give us some sense of how much material you think is still going across? How watertight or otherwise that frontier is?

SECRETARY PERRY: The Serbian government has stated its intention to stop the shipping of war materiel to the Bosnian Serbs. We have incomplete reports which indicate that that's being partially but not fully complied with. There has been, indeed, some significant stoppage but certainly not a complete stoppage. We count on Russia as the member of the Contact Group with the best communications, the best contact with the Serbs, the Serbian government, to represent the position of the Contact Group to Serbia and to assist in the verification and the enforcement of this particular edict. It's not going--it's going--it's improved today but it's not going completely yet, and we expect the Russians to assist in the compliance on this. We discussed this issue, by the way, at the Summit meeting in Washington just a few days ago with both Defense Minister Grachev and with President Yeltsin, and got a good indication of support and cooperation from them. They are fully supportive of the objectives of the Contact Group.

MR. BACON: Gentleman right here in the fourth row.

Q. Yes, my name is Ricardo Erman, I am from the Italian news agency ANSA. And Mr. Secretary, when you mentioned just now the southern flank, the Mediterranean security, you mentioned by name a number of countries, not including Italy. Does it have any particular reason? This is one question.

SECRETARY PERRY: Not at all. I was mentioning the two

extreme ends, the East end and the West end. I would also emphasize France and Italy as very important members. And Italy, if anything, is deeply, deeply involved in the issues and the problems concerning security in the southern flank. And I have discussed this in great detail with your Defense Minister Previti. We have a clear understanding, not only the role Italy plays unilaterally here, but the very important role they can play in helping to build confidence among some of the smaller nations, and some of the Balkan nations, for example, in bringing them into some of their joint exercises, for example, as a way of developing confidence-building measures in that area. Italy plays a critically important role in this whole issue.

Q. Yes. If you'll allow me to add, I would like to ask you whether you still plan to use the Italian base of Aviano as main operation base against--for the air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs if they take place.

SECRETARY PERRY: We will continue to use the Aviano air base for that purpose as long as the Italian government is willing to host us for doing that.

MR. BACON: The lady in front here. Back there--there was somebody who wanted to ask a question. Yes.

Q. Henny Luvich from Agence France Presse. I wonder, Mr. Minister, do you agree with your German colleague's idea that NATO should soon say which countries should join NATO and which shouldn't? And if you agree, which ones are the ones you think should join and who shouldn't join?

SECRETARY PERRY: We've just, at the meeting today, just began the discussion of NATO expansion--the process by which we would determine how to do this. I think, myself, that we're at the very early stages. We have certainly not specified who or when and we're not likely to in the near future. Our primary emphasis today is on developing and building the Partnership for Peace. The Partnership for Peace not only is a valuable and important function in itself, but for those members--for those Partnership for Peace partners who want to become NATO members it is the crucial avenue to success. Through its joint exercises and joint training and joint procedures, those countries will be taking the actions they need to take in order to become NATO members in time.

MR. BACON: The lady right here. You. Excuse me, over here, sir.

Q. Mr. Secretary, Bruce Clark from the Financial Times. With regard to the procedure for conducting air raids, is what I understand that in your vision of things, as soon as UNPROFOR

had invoked air power, they would then lose further control? The double key would cease as soon as the decision to invoke air power had been made, and all further decisions would be made by NATO.

SECRETARY PERRY: In that regard, the situation would not be different than it is now, which I will describe a little bit of that process to you to maybe throw some light on that question. Today, UNPROFOR and NATO, in this case CINCSOUTH, meet regularly to discuss what they--to prepare what they call "target sets." These are targets that would be called on in an air strike. And then UNPROFOR decides that if a given provocation calls for a strike, and they could then call for that strike and in this new approach there would be an agreed--some number of targets would be selected from this target set. But it's a target set which both sides had agreed to previously. A number would be selected. Then the air mission would be undertaken. Once the airplanes took off, then it is up to the air crew, based on tactical conditions--weather, terrain and so on--to decide which of the targets to go for. But that's also true today. Once the target is agreed to and the airplane takes off, it is a matter for the air crew at that point. The difference is that today they do not have sufficient flexibility because they only have typically one target in their set.

Q. A quick follow-up. My understanding of what happened last Thursday is that the--a week ago--is that the violations occurred about 9:30 in the morning and the air raid at about 3:30 in the afternoon, and during those intervening seven hours or so there was a fairly continuous, sort of backward and forward dialogue between the sort of UN people and the NATO people, right up to the moment of the strike. And it was the UN peoples' judgment that they should avoid the taking of life since life hadn't been lost on the UN side. And I mean right down to the moment when they decided to take out that particular tank, there was fairly ongoing exchanges. And is it now going to be the case that the UN's input will cease much earlier, if you like, in the operation?

SECRETARY PERRY: That operation, which you correctly described, violated all three of the rules that I have. Now the UN commander may decide, if he's not willing to accept those three, not to call for an air strike. NATO is saying, if we are going to be used for an air strike, we want to be used effectively. We do not want to either endanger our crews necessarily, nor do we want to go out on an operation which turns out to be ineffective.

MR. BACON: We have time for two more questions. The first is this patient gentleman on the center aisle. You.

SECRETARY PERRY: Let me just make one more comment on that last point. It's not just a matter of maintaining NATO's credibility as being able to affect the air power. We believe this will serve UNPROFOR very much better.

MR. BACON: Right here on the center aisle.

Q. Brooks Tigner, Defense News. I'd like to come back to my colleague's question. According to the Germans, there's broad Alliance agreement, including that of the U.S., on the fact that the V-Four--the Visegrad Four--should be the first candidates to be admitted into NATO. But the Germans also say that absolutely no--there should be absolutely no membership for Russia. What is the U.S. view on that, please?

SECRETARY PERRY: Try that question again. I didn't understand it.

Q. The Germans have told us that there was broad Alliance agreement for their views that the Visegrad Four should be the first countries admitted into NATO once NATO expands. The Germans are also opposed to any membership--any membership for Russia, ever. Could you please tell us what the U.S. view is on NATO membership for Russia?

SECRETARY PERRY: First of all let me say that while there may be individual defense ministers who have views on that, neither of those issues was discussed at the meeting today. We did not take a position, or even significantly discuss either of those issues. I have personally discussed this issue with Minister Ruehe and will discuss it with him in the future, but it was not an item of discussion at the meeting today. Secondly, the U.S. position is that we should begin the process of considering NATO expansion, but it's entirely premature at this point to specify which countries are going to be joining or not joining and it's entirely premature to try to set a calendar or time date to it yet.

MR. BACON: Lady in front--the lady right down here in the fourth row.

Q. (in Spanish)

SECRETARY PERRY: I will answer that as directly and as honestly as I can. At the meeting today, we set a theme, for which there was a broad consensus, that we should be shifting our attention to the south and we should be paying much more attention to security issues in the south. That theme was worth stating--was worth affirming. Now, if you ask me what specific programs were put together to carry out that theme, the answer was, very few. We had an emphasis--we agreed that we would be conducting joint exercises with partners in the

southern flank, and as we put our Partnership for Peace exercise together, there would be a major emphasis on that and a major emphasis on funding in that direction. But I can't cite specific examples beyond that, of particular programs. I think those will unfold over the next year. Yes?

MR. BACON: Last question here. You.

Q. Francois Clemenceau of the French radio Europe 1. What do you think about the speech of Mr. Leotard yesterday about the situation in Algeria? Do you agree with him when he speaks about the very serious risk of Islamic spread on Algeria's neighbors, Tunisia and Morocco? And are you going to change your position vis a vis the Islamic fronts based in the United States of America?

SECRETARY PERRY: That's an excellent question for a Secretary of State, not for a Defense Minister, and I will refer that question to him when I get home.

Thank you very much.

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